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EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN (AND GIRLS)

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history and in many societies, women have been sharing similar experiences of inequality between the sexes, the causes of which are directly linked to a complex historical process. Inequality also derives from political, economic, social and cultural factors and the form in which it manifests itself is as varied as the economic, social and cultural conditions of the world community. One of the basic factors is the division of labour between the sexes, which has been justified on the basis of the childbearing function of women that is inherent in womanhood. Consequently, the distribution of tasks and responsibilities of women and men in society has restricted women mainly to the domestic sphere. As a result, women have often been regarded and treated as inferior in their activities outside the domestic sphere and have accordingly suffered violations of their human rights.

"The contributions of feminist theory provide both theoretical and methodological inputs to training, promoting and defending women's rights. These theoretical foundations introduce to the educational process issues related to gender-based domination. The situations of subordination, domination, sexual and social myths and roles, socialization in early childhood, the treatment accorded to girls/women and boys/men in the life cycle, the double workday, and domestic work, among others, provide insight into the magnitude of the issues related to women's rights."

Elizabeth Dasso, Director, Peru

The problem of inequality has been recognized and the responsibility to effect change through the implementation of human rights instruments has been acknowledged at the international level. The present issue of *Women 2000* delineates action taken by the United Nations to achieve equality, such as the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[1] and the communications procedure of the Commission on the Status of Women, and examines priority areas for action that have been recognized by the international community. These areas include the adoption of temporary special measures, such as affirmative action, to rectify previous discriminatory practices; the importance of investing in the girl child; and the necessity of instructing the population in general, and women in particular, in legal literacy.

The decisions taken or the positions adopted in the United Nations reflect the policies or intentions of its member States, which on 31 July 1992 numbered 179. Action taken on the basis of international instruments and recommendations is mainly at the national level, particularly with regard to equality. While equality has been built into the constitutions or legislation of most countries, real equality in day-to-day life has been achieved nowhere. Laws establishing or reinforcing de jure equality can be made only at the national level. The enforcement of such laws and the implementation of recommendations to ensure the achievement of de facto equality can likewise only be undertaken at the national level.

"In today's society, the concept that men are superior to women still lingers in many people's minds and the phenomenon of discrimination against women exists in many areas."

Chen Mingxia, Associate Researcher, China

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The principle of equality between the sexes has been promoted by the United Nations since its inception. The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, adopted in 1945, proclaimed the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". Article 1 of the Charter states that one of the purposes of the United Nations is: "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". Only

"Governments should publicly declare their commitment to a policy of providing equal opportunities, especially at the highest level."

Division for the Advancement of Women

half the States that adopted the Charter, however, allowed women an unrestricted right to vote and most of them did not accord women equal rights before the law. The task was then to achieve the promised equality. Since 1945, the elimination of discrimination based on sex has progressed from a declaration of the basic principle to a concern with the practicalities of achieving elimination of discrimination in both law and practice.

The Commission on the Status of Women was one of the first subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council to be established, initially as a subcommission of the Commission on Human Rights. It was upgraded to a Commission in its own right in 1946, with the functions of preparing recommendations and reports on promoting women's rights in the political, economic, social and educational fields and of making recommendations on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, reiterated the reaffirmation of faith in the equal rights of men and women as contained in the Preamble to the Charter. Article 1 of the Declaration opens with the sentence: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

A major step towards the attainment of the goal of equal rights for women was taken on 18 December 1979, when the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The 30 articles of the Convention set out in legally binding form internationally accepted principles and measures to achieve equal rights for women everywhere.

In 1985, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.[2] The Strategies outline obstacles to the achievement of full equality between women and men, and suggest how Governments, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations could overcome them.

"A long-term assessment of the performance and achievements of the UN system in the field of international equality issues and women's concerns leads to the conclusion that normative progress surpasses the operative, concrete results. It is therefore a paramount challenge in the coming years that the practical development of everyday life for women and men all around the world catches up with the principles and ideals already agreed upon."

United Nations and the advancement of women, the Nordic UN Project, Report No. 16, 1990

In 1987, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted resolutions in which it decided to structure the agenda for its future sessions and determined a long-term work programme of priority themes under the rubrics of equality, development and peace. In preparation for the submission of substantive background documents to the Commission, the Secretariat holds expert group meetings on these priority themes whenever possible.

In 1990, the Commission undertook the first quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies and found that:

"The entrenched resistance to women's advancement and the reduction of resources available for change that has accompanied the world economic situation in the late 1980s have meant that there has been a loss of impetus and even stagnation in some areas where more progress would have been expected."

PRIORITY THEMES ON EQUALITY: 1988-1996

1988: National machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women

1989: Equality in economic and social participation

1990: Equality in political participation and decision-making

1991: Vulnerable women, including migrant women

1992: Elimination of de jure and de facto discrimination against women

1993: Increased awareness by women of their rights, including legal literacy

1994: Equal pay for work of equal value, including methodologies for measurement of pay inequities and work in the informal sector

1995: Equality in economic decision-making

1996: Elimination of stereotyping of women in the mass media

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and concluded that

"The costs to societies of failing to implement the Strategies will be high in terms of slowed economic and social development, misuse of human resources and reduced progress for society as a whole."

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted on 18 December 1979 and entered into force on 3 September 1981. The success of the Convention is reflected in the 114 ratifications and accessions received by 14 May 1992.

The Convention recalls that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity. The text of the Convention contains universal and inalienable rights that are already embedded in the Charter of the United Nations. It is an internationally binding legal instrument, which sets international standards for the treatment of women in all areas of life and guarantees their rights to a life of full equality, to self-development and to full participation in all aspects of society. The existence of inconsistencies between customary and State laws is a common problem in many developing countries. Customary laws are often recognized, particularly when they do not seem to conflict with State laws.

"Despite considerable progress in eliminating legal discrimination, as indicated by the widespread acceptance of the norms set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, discrimination still exists in practice in all countries, as shown by statistics on the ratio of women to men in education, the labour force and decision-making positions."

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Measures provide for women equal rights with men in political and public life; equal access to education and the same choice as men of curricula; non-discrimination in employment and pay; and guarantees of job security in the event of marriage and maternity. The Convention underlines the equal responsibilities of men and women in the context of family life. It also stresses the social services needed, especially child-care facilities, to enable family obligations to be combined with work responsibilities and participation in public life. Additional articles of the Convention call for non-discriminatory health-care services for women, including those related to family

MILESTONES OF UNITED NATIONS ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Women, more than ever, are on the global agenda, as a result of 30 years of constant advocacy and pressure.

1946: The Commission on the Status of Women formed to monitor the situation of women and promote women's rights around the world.

1952: The Commission initiates the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the first global mandate to grant women equal political rights under the law: the right to vote, to hold office and to exercise public functions.

1957 and 1962: Conventions initiated on the equality of married women, guaranteeing them equal rights in marriage and in dissolving marriage.

1967: Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

1975: International Women's Year. The World Conference of the International Women's Year held at Mexico City proclaims 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. For the first time, agencies are asked to collect thorough statistical information on women.

1979: The General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

1980: The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held at Copenhagen, adopts the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Agencies are asked to prepare the most recent data and time-trend analyses on the situation of women.

1985: The Nairobi World Conference reviews the progress achieved during the United Nations Decade for Women and adopts the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

Source: The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, Social Statistics and Indicators, Series K, No. 8 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3).

"Experience has shown that most countries implement rather quickly the first of their obligations, which is the removal of discriminatory laws. Some countries undertake affirmative actions to speed up the achievement of the second obligation, the de facto equality. The most difficult, however, is to comply with the third commitment, the elimination of discriminatory attitudes, conduct, prejudices and practices. That can only be achieved through a firm political commitment."

"The Convention obliges States parties to take all necessary action, including legislation and temporary measures to combat discrimination based on sex."

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planning, the accordance to women of a legal capacity identical to that of men, and requires that States parties agree that all contracts and other private instruments that restrict the legal capacity of women "shall be deemed null and void". Article 5 requires States parties to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.

Under article 18, States parties undertake to submit a report within one year of ratification of the Convention, and thereafter at least every four years, on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures that they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and on the progress made.

"For legal change to benefit women, it must reflect and address the real needs and interests of women. To ensure this, women must therefore participate in the formulation of legal change and monitor those changes to ensure that they are working in the manner intended. Fostering a conscious constituency of women through education and organization is therefore a necessary complement to legal change."

Roberta Clarke, Coordinator, Trinidad and Tobago

Copies of the Convention are available in all the official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) from the Division for the Advancement of Women. In some countries, the Convention has been translated into the national language. A German translation is also available from the Division for the Advancement of Women.

By becoming a party to the Convention, a State makes an international commitment to the principle of the dignity and worth of all its citizens and to the eradication of all discrimination that precludes women from the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The legal obligations under the Convention are threefold: first, the Convention addresses the removal of discriminatory laws and obstacles to equality; second, it promotes equality by affirmative action; and third, it aims at eliminating attitudes, conduct, prejudices and practices that are based on the inferiority or superiority of either sex.

The Convention can only take effect, however, if it reaches all levels of society. Attitudes must be changed at the grass-roots level, inside families and throughout society at large in order to end discrimination.

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was established in accordance with article 17 of the Convention. It meets annually to examine reports submitted by States parties under the terms of article 18.

The Committee is composed of "twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention". The experts are elected by the States parties from among national candidates and serve in their personal capacity. Consideration is given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of different forms of civilization as well as the principal legal systems.

The experts who have served on the Committee for the first 10 years have indeed reflected these ideals. While most have been lawyers, judges or legal scholars, they have also included specialists in economics, diplomacy, mass communications and sociology.

During the consideration of country reports, the Government representative and the Committee members engage in a constructive dialogue, an exchange of ideas and experiences, in order to identify gaps and obstacles to achieving equality and to encourage new endeavours. Questioning during the presentation of a country report has even provoked occasional minor changes in national law and at least a few parties have appeared willing to use their dealings with the Committee as an occasion for a genuine review and re-examination of national laws, policies and practices.

Status of submission and consideration of reports by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as at 14 May 1992*

States parties to the Convention	Initial report			Second periodic report			Third periodic report		
	Due**	Submitted	Considered	Due	Submitted	Considered	Due	Submitted	Considered
Angola	1987			1991			1995		
Antigua and Barbuda	1990			1994			1998		
Argentina	1986	1986	1988	1990	1992		1994		
Australia	1984	1986	1988	1988			1992		
Austria	1983	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1991		
Bangladesh	1985	1986	1987	1989	1990		1993		
Barbados	1982	1990	1992	1986	1991		1990	1992	
Belgium	1986	1987	1989	1990			1994		
Belize	1991			1995			1999		
Benin	1993			1997			2001		
Bhutan	1982			1986			1990		
Bolivia	1991	1991		1995			1999		
Brazil	1985			1989			1993		
Bulgaria	1983	1983	1985	1987			1991		
Burkina Faso	1988	1990	1991	1992			1996		
Burundi	1993			1997			2001		
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic	1982	1982	1983	1986	1987	1989	1990		
Canada	1983	1983	1985	1987	1988	1990	1991		
Cape Verde	1982			1986			1990		
Central African Republic	1992			1996			2000		
Chile	1991	1991		1995			1999		
China	1982	1983	1984	1986	1989	1992	1990		
Colombia	1983	1986	1987	1987			1991		
Congo	1983			1987			1991		
Costa Rica	1987			1991					
Cuba	1982	1982	1983	1986	1992		1990	1992	
Cyprus	1986			1990			1994		
Czechoslovakia	1983	1984	1986	1987	1989	1992	1991		
Democratic Yemen	1985	1989		1989	1989		1993		
Denmark	1984	1984	1986	1988	1988	1991	1992		
Dominica	1982			1986			1990		
Dominican Republic	1983	1986	1988	1987			1991		
Ecuador	1982	1984	1986	1986	1990		1990	1991	
Egypt	1982	1983	1984	1986	1986	1990	1990		
El Salvador	1982	1983	1986	1986	1987	1992	1990		
Equatorial Guinea	1985	1987	1989	1989			1993		
Estonia	1992			1996			2000		
Ethiopia	1982			1986			1990		
Finland	1987	1988	1989	1991			1995		
France	1985	1986	1987	1989	1990		1993		
Gabon	1984	1987	1989	1988			1992		
German Democratic Rep.	1982	1982	1983	1986	1987	1989			
Germany, Fed. Rep. of	1986	1988	1990	1990			1994		
Ghana	1987	1991	1992	1991	1991	1992	1995		
Greece	1984	1985	1987	1988			1992		
Grenada	1991								
Guatemala	1983	1991		1987	1991		1991		
Guinea	1983			1987			1991		
Guinea-Bissau	1986			1990			1994		
Guyana	1982	1990		1986			1990		
Haiti	1982			1986			1990		
Honduras	1984	1986	1992	1988	1987	1992	1992	1991	1992
Hungary	1982	1982	1984	1986	1986	1988	1990	1992	
Iceland	1986			1990			1994		
Indonesia	1985	1986	1988	1989			1993		
Iraq	1987	1990		1991			1995		
Ireland	1987	1987	1989	1991			1995		
Italy	1986	1989	1991	1990			1994		

continued

(continued)

States parties to the Convention	Initial report			Second periodic report			Third periodic report		
	Due**	Submitted	Considered	Due	Submitted	Considered	Due	Submitted	Considered
Jamaica	1985	1986	1988	1989			1993		
Japan	1986	1987	1988	1990	1992		1994		
Kenya	1985	1990		1989	1990		1993		
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	1982			1986			1990		
Latvia	1993			1997			2001		
Liberia	1985			1989			1993		
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1990	1991		1994			1998		
Luxembourg	1990			1994			1998		
Madagascar	1990	1990		1994			1998		
Malawi	1988	1988	1990	1992			1996		
Mali	1986	1986	1988	1990			1994		
Malta	1992			1996			2000		
Mauritius	1985	1992		1989	1992		1993		
Mexico	1982	1982	1983	1986	1987	1990	1990		
Mongolia	1982	1983	1986	1986	1987	1990	1990		
Nepal	1992								
Netherlands	1992			1996			2000		
New Zealand	1986	1986	1988	1990			1994		
Nicaragua	1982	1987	1989	1986	1989		1990		
Nigeria	1986	1987	1988	1990			1994		
Norway	1982	1982	1984	1986	1988	1991	1990	1991	
Panama	1982	1982	1985	1986			1990		
Paraguay	1988			1992			1996		
Peru	1983	1988	1990	1987	1990		1991		
Philippines	1982	1982	1984	1986	1988	1991	1990		
Poland	1982	1985	1987	1986	1988	1991	1990	1990	1991
Portugal	1982	1983	1986	1986	1989	1991	1990	1990	1991
Republic of Korea	1986	1986	1987	1990	1989		1994		
Romania	1983	1987		1987			1991		
Rwanda	1982	1983	1984	1986	1988	1991	1990	1991	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1986			1990			1994		
Saint Lucia	1983			1987			1991		
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1982	1991		1986	1991		1990	1991	
Senegal	1986	1986	1988	1990	1991		1994		
Seychelles	1993			1997			2001		
Sierra Leone	1989			1993			1997		
Spain	1985	1985	1987	1989	1989	1992	1993		
Sri Lanka	1982	1985	1987	1986	1988	1992	1990		
Sweden	1982	1982	1983	1986	1987	1988	1990	1990	
Thailand	1986	1987	1990	1990			1994		
Togo	1984			1988			1992		
Trinidad and Tobago	1991			1994			1998		
Tunisia	1986			1990			1994		
Turkey	1987	1987	1990	1991			1995		
Uganda	1986			1990			1994		
Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic	1982	1983	1983	1986	1987	1990	1990	1991	
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1987	1987	1990	1991	1991		1995		
United Rep. of Tanzania	1986	1988	1990	1990			1994		
Uruguay	1982	1984	1988	1986			1990		
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	1983	1983	1983	1986	1987	1989	1990	1991	
Venezuela	1984	1984	1986	1988	1989	1992	1992		
Viet Nam	1983	1984	1986	1987			1991		
Yugoslavia	1983	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1991		
Zaire	1987			1991			1995		
Zambia	1986	1991		1990	1991		1994		
Zimbabwe	1992			1996			2000		

* Country names and designations are those that were in use when the reports were submitted.
** One year prior to the due date, the Secretary-General invites the State party to submit its report.

As well as considering country reports, the Committee makes general recommendations (20 to date) to States parties regarding the implementation of the Convention and their reporting obligations. In the light of its experience of examining country reports, the Committee is able to identify certain grey areas in which it invites Governments to take special care, adopt corrective measures and to elaborate on the results in their reports. General recommendation 3, for instance, notes that reports present features showing the existence of stereotyped conceptions of women and "urges all States parties effectively to adopt education and public information programmes, which will help eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the full operation of the principle of the social equality of women". In general recommendation 18, the Committee "recommends that States parties provide information on disabled women in their periodic reports, and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, including special measures to ensure that they have equal access to education and employment, health services and social security, and to ensure that they can participate in all areas of social and cultural life".

General recommendation No. 13 (eighth session 1989)

Equal remuneration for work of equal value

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,

Recalling International Labour Organisation Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, which has been ratified by a large majority of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

Recalling also that it has considered 51 initial and five second periodic reports of States parties since 1983,

Considering that although reports of States parties indicate that, even though the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value has been accepted in the legislation of many countries, more remains to be done to ensure the application of that principle in practice, in order to overcome the gender-segregation in the labour market,

Recommends to the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that:

1. In order to implement fully the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, those States parties that have not yet ratified ILO Convention No. 100 should be encouraged to do so;

2. They should consider the study, development and adoption of job evaluation systems based on gender-neutral criteria that would facilitate the comparison of the value of those jobs of a different nature, in which women presently predominate, with those jobs in which men presently predominate, and they should include the results achieved in their reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

3. They should support, as far as practicable, the creation of implementation machinery and encourage the efforts of the parties to collective agreements, where they apply, to ensure the application of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

General recommendation No. 14 (ninth session, 1990)

Female circumcision

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,

Concerned about the continuation of the practice of female circumcision and other traditional practices harmful to the health of women,

Noting with satisfaction that Governments, where such practices exist, national women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, and bodies of the United Nations system, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as the Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, remain seized of the issue having particularly recognized that such traditional practices as female circumcision have serious health and other consequences for women and children,

Taking note with interest of the study of the Special Rapporteur on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children,* and of the study of the Special Working Group on Traditional Practices,**

Recognizing that women are taking important action themselves to identify and to combat practices that are prejudicial to the health and well-being of women and children,

Convinced that the important action that is being taken by women and by all interested groups needs to be supported and encouraged by Governments,

Noting with grave concern that there are continuing cultural, traditional and economic pressures which help to perpetuate harmful practices, such as female circumcision,

Recommends that States parties:

(a) Take appropriate and effective measures with a view to eradicating the practice of female circumcision. Such measures could include:

(i) The collection and dissemination by universities, medical or nursing associations, national women's organizations or other bodies of basic data about such traditional practices;

(ii) The support of women's organizations at the national and local levels working for the elimination of female circumcision and other practices harmful to women;

(iii) The encouragement of politicians, professionals, religious and community leaders at all levels, including the media and the arts, to cooperate in influencing attitudes towards the eradication of female circumcision;

(iv) The introduction of appropriate educational and training programmes and seminars based on research findings about the problems arising from female circumcision;

(b) Include in their national health policies appropriate strategies aimed at eradicating female circumcision in public health care. Such strategies could include the special responsibility of health personnel, including traditional birth attendants, to explain the harmful effects of female circumcision;

(c) Invite assistance, information and advice from the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system to support and assist efforts being deployed to eliminate harmful traditional practices;

(d) Include in their reports to the Committee under articles 10 and 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women information about measures taken to eliminate female circumcision.

* E/CN.4/Sub.2/1989/42.

** E/CN.4/1986/42.

General recommendation No. 15 (ninth session, 1990)

Avoidance of discrimination against women in national strategies for the prevention and control of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,

Having considered information brought to its attention on the potential effects of both the global pandemic of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and strategies to control it on the exercise of the rights of women,

Having regard to the reports and materials prepared by the World Health Organization and other United Nations organizations, organs and bodies in relation to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and, in particular, the note by the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women on the effects of AIDS on the advancement of women* and the Final Document of the International Consultation on AIDS and Human Rights, held at Geneva from 26 to 28 July 1989,**

Noting World Health Assembly resolution WHA 41.24 on the avoidance of discrimination in relation to HIV-infected people and people with AIDS of 13 May 1988, resolution 1989/11 of the Commission on Human Rights on non-discrimination in the field of health, of 2 March 1989, and in particular the Paris Declaration on Women, Children and AIDS, of 30 November 1989,

Noting that the World Health Organization has announced that the theme of World Aids Day, 1 December 1990, will be "Women and Aids",

Recommends:

(a) That States parties intensify efforts in disseminating information to increase public awareness of the risk of HIV infection and AIDS, especially in women and children, and of its effects on them;

(b) That programmes to combat AIDS should give special attention to the rights and needs of women and children, and to the factors relating to the reproductive role of women and their subordinate position in some societies which make them especially vulnerable to HIV infection;

(c) That States parties ensure the active participation of women in primary health care and take measures to enhance their role as care providers, health workers and educators in the prevention of infection with HIV;

(d) That all States parties include in their reports under article 12 of the Convention information on the effects of AIDS on the situation of women and on the action taken to cater to the needs of those women who are infected and to prevent specific discrimination against women in response to AIDS.

* E/CN.6/1989/6/Add.1.
** HR/AIDS/1989/3.

Eleventh session

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its eleventh session in New York from 20 to 31 January 1992.

The Committee had before it the initial reports of Barbados, Ghana and Honduras; and the second periodic reports of China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

After examining the reports, the Committee adopted two general recommendations: No. 19 on violence against women and No. 20 on reservations to the Convention.

ACTION WATCH

The International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) is a global network of individuals and organizations that monitors, analyses and promotes changes in laws and policies affecting the status of women. IWRAW uses the Convention as the focal point for its activities and is the only non-governmental organization focusing on the Convention and its relation to human rights and development. It developed out of workshops on the Convention held at the Nairobi World Conference in 1985.

Several publications have been issued by IWRAW to publicize the Convention and to promote compliance. Its quarterly, *Women's Watch*, publicizes cases of adherence to, and violations of, the Convention worldwide. These publications are available on request. Developing country Governments and organizations will receive them free of charge. A full list of publications is available from IWRAW, Women, Public Policy and Development Project, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, 301-19th Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, United States of America.

Regional seminar/workshop

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has the best record of ratifications in the world as only two States are not yet parties to the Convention. Of the 11 Caribbean States that have ratified it, however, only three have submitted their initial reports to the Committee.

A regional seminar/workshop for Caribbean countries was held in Antigua and Barbuda, from 6 to 9 April 1992, to improve compliance with the reporting obligations and to raise awareness about the Convention and its applicability. It provided a forum for an exchange of experience between the countries that were States parties and those that had not yet ratified the Convention.

Organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, the seminar was attended by government nominees of all but one country of the region. All the participating countries confirmed their commitment to implementing the Convention and outlined positive steps that had been taken to disseminate information, collect data, modify existing laws or introduce new ones. Many participants pointed to the need for: continuing education in the provisions of the Convention; legislative reform; a review of sex-role stereotyping in school textbooks; and data disaggregated by gender.

Some of the reasons given for the failure to submit national reports were: that the national machinery had still not succeeded in eliminating existing discriminatory legal provisions; financial constraints; structural problems; lack of communication between government offices; and lack of statistical data. It was mentioned that some Governments were reluctant to submit reports that were less than favourable.

On the basis of its conclusions, the seminar/workshop made the following recommendations:

(a) Women should be made aware of their rights under the Convention;

(b) As far as possible, there should be harmonization at the regional level of laws relating to the implementation of the Convention;

(c) Delegations whose task it is to present the country report

INVITATION TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

"The potential of non-governmental organizations to collaborate with the Committee was stressed. Means of involving non-governmental organizations, especially from developing countries, given the resource constraints, were discussed. The role of international non-governmental organizations in facilitating such an involvement was noted and the work of the International Women's Rights Action Watch to encourage the development of national non-governmental organizations in developing countries was cited. The Committee requested the Secretariat to include in its publication *Women 2000* ... an invitation to non-governmental organizations to provide members of the Committee with information for their use and requested the Secretariat to send information thus received to Committee members."*

**Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/46/38), chap. V, sect. 8.

to the Committee should comprise more than one representative. Ideally, the person from the Bureau of Women's Affairs should be one of them;

(d) There is a need for constant collaboration between those writing and those presenting the reports;

(e) A request should be made for the Convention to be included on the agenda of the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to be held at Nassau, Bahamas, in May 1992, and in all other relevant CARICOM and Commonwealth meetings;

(f) The media should be encouraged to give full coverage to all articles of the Convention;

(g) A person should be designated within each Ministry to assist in the preparation of periodic reports;

(h) An interministerial committee comprising top-level officials, who would facilitate the preparation of reports under all human rights instruments, should be established;

(i) There should be widespread dissemination of the Convention in a simple form;

(j) All available means (including events, such as International Women's Day) should be employed to publicize the Convention;

(k) Training workshops should be held at the national and regional levels to sensitize senior government officials;

(l) There should be consultation with non-governmental organizations in preparing reports;

(m) Use should be made of existing networks to obtain information necessary for preparing the report;

(n) Relevant statistics should be included in all country reports;

(o) There should be a wide circulation of the report at the national level before its submission by the Government;

(p) The report should be widely circulated after its submission, and the Division for the Advancement of Women should make additional copies available to the submitting State for that purpose;

(q) After its consideration at a session of the Committee, the national report and the summary records pertaining thereto should be made available to the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

A twofold approach is being recommended in order to achieve equality. While the long-term solution can be achieved only by education and changing attitudes and customs, short-term measures to increase women's opportunities and participation can be justified. If both approaches are undertaken simultaneously, it is not always clear to which category a certain action might belong as the approaches are interrelated: the short-term measures lead to the long-term solution.

In order to rectify past and persistent inequities, it would be necessary to take action giving women a certain advantage over men. The policies would be of a purely temporary nature to accelerate the achievement of equality, after which they would be discontinued. The measures would be aimed at combating the current direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination and at creating new practices within the framework of existing gender-neutral legal instruments. Their adoption would reflect an understanding that social, political and economic structures were often established at a time when discrimination existed and that, without temporary measures to alter those structures, progress towards significant societal objectives such as democracy, freedom of choice and social justice will be unjustifiably slowed. It also reflects an understanding that economic efficiency is impaired by underusing the potential of a large segment of the population. A number of recommendations on the subject have been made by the international community.

Article 4 of the Convention states:

> *"Adoption by States parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved."*

The Forward-looking Strategies (which, although not legally binding, were adopted by 157 States) include, for instance, the following paragraphs:

> *"Governments that have not yet done so should establish appropriate institutional procedures whereby the application of a revised set of laws and administrative measures may be effectively enforced from the village level up and may be adequately monitored so that individual women may, without obstruc-*

tion or cost to themselves, seek to have discriminatory treatment redressed. Legislation that concerns women as a group should also be effectively enforced and monitored so that areas of systemic or de facto discrimination against women can be redressed. To this end, positive action policy should be developed." (Paragraph 61)

"Governments are urged to encourage the full participation of women in the whole range of occupations, especially in fields previously regarded as male preserves, in order to break down occupational barriers and taboos. Employment equity programmes should be developed to integrate women into all economic activities on an equal basis with men. Special measures designed to redress the imbalance imposed by centuries of discrimination against women should be promoted to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. Those measures should not be considered discriminatory or entail the maintenance of unequal or separate standards. They are to be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. Governments should ensure that their public service is an exemplary equal opportunity employer." (Paragraph 84)

"Governments should effectively secure participation of women in the decision-making processes at a national, State and local level through legislative and administrative measures. ... Special activities should be undertaken to increase the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women, especially to decision-making and policy-making positions, by publicizing posts more widely, increasing upward mobility and so on, until equitable representation of women is achieved." (Paragraph 88)

"Political parties and other organizations such as trade unions should make a deliberate effort to increase and improve women's participation within their ranks." (Paragraph 91)

At its seventh session, in 1988, the Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 5:

"Temporary special measures

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,

Taking note that the reports, the introductory remarks and the replies by States parties reveal that while significant progress has been achieved in regard to repealing or modifying discriminatory laws, there is still a need for action to be taken to implement fully the Convention by introducing measures to promote de facto equality between men and women,

Recalling article 4.1 of the Convention,

Recommends that States parties make more use of temporary special measures such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems to advance women's integration into education, the economy, politics and employment."

The recommendations arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies contained similar reiterations:

Governments, non-governmental organizations and private-sector enterprises should take special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in economic decision-making ... (recommendation IV)

Governments and/or appropriate parties should ... renew their efforts to close the gap between women's and men's pay, possibly by 1995, and take special measures to address the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. (recommendation V)

Governments, political parties, trade unions and professional and other representative groups should each aim at targets to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30 per cent by 1995 ... (recommendation VI)

One temporary special measure, positive action, has been defined by the Committee for Equality between Women and Men of the Council of Europe as "a strategy (action programme) designed to establish de facto equality of chances through measures which make it possible to counteract or correct discrimination resulting from social systems or practices".[3] The direct objective of positive action is to encourage the exercise of rights to equal treatment and opportunity in all spheres of life. Positive action programmes are a combination of corrective actions, new practices and promotional measures. They involve identifying and analysing the roots of discrimination and then changing the operational rules or practices that maintain discrimination. They can include not only remedial measures aimed at achieving immediate results, but also alternative non-discriminatory practices that would even eliminate the need for temporary measures.

Judging from the reports to the Committee of 19 States par-

ties on the implementation of article 4.1 of the Convention, positive action programmes are being implemented in a number of countries in education and training, employment and political participation, and have had a positive impact on the advancement of women.

PERMANENT MEASURES

Apart from positive action and other temporary measures that should cease upon the achievement of equality, other measures of a more permanent nature could be undertaken to the advantage of women. These would include an increase in child-care facilities, the introduction of more flexible working hours and of changes in educational curricula to ensure the abolition of stereotyping by sex, and the enforcement of equality legislation. Such measures have been repeatedly called for during recent years; however, with varying degrees of success. It can be anticipated that as long as the powers that be continue to be predominantly male, changes will only be introduced slowly, if at all. As it is in women's interest, primarily, to make such changes, it is imperative that women have a fair share in the decision-making processes and are in a position to influence policies and to initiate change. Moreover, men need to be convinced that they could only gain through women's achievement of equality.

> *"The view which women will have of the usefulness and relevance of the law depends on how they actually see it as solving their most important problems."*
>
> Amy S. Tsanga, Lawyer, Zimbabwe

Awareness-raising

While, on the one hand, special temporary measures will automatically succeed in raising awareness of at least certain

> *"Legally, women have equality with men. However, de facto discrimination exists at all levels. Mostly, the discrimination stems from cultural practices and religious beliefs of the society. The perceived place of the women in the society is that of subordination to men. ... Unless women know and utilise laws that give them rights, they ... derive no benefits from such laws. ... Rights awareness programmes must be targeted not only at women but at the community in general so that men and institutions run by them will help rather than impede the aspirations of women."*
>
> Akua Kuenyehia, Senior Lecturer, Ghana

problems and inequalities, on the other hand, education and access to information are crucial to the full promotion and improvement of the status of women and to enabling them to fulfil their role as full members of society.

Investing now in the girl child would be the best way of achieving equality for women of the future. Ensuring opportunity of unrestricted access to formal education at all levels and in all fields would result in a lower rate of illiteracy among women, a higher general standard of education, increased skills and consequently better possibilities of employment and economic independence, not to mention increased self-confidence. When girls receive the same education as boys, much of the perception of women as being inferior will become obsolete. This measure alone, however, is not enough. There is so much engrained stereotyping within societies that the awareness of all age groups must be raised in order to eradicate it. To make the most of equal educational opportunities, girls would require the support, and therefore the understanding, of their parents and grandparents. Because of the caring role of women, older women are often responsible for the raising of grandchildren and through their influence traditional perceptions and roles are easily perpetuated. Any efforts to raise awareness must therefore be directed at the whole of society, young and old, women and men.

Non-governmental organizations have an enormous influence in the area of awareness-raising as they network in such a way as to be able to reach women at the grass roots and demonstrate the practical advantages of equality. By connecting the work of such organizations with efforts made at the national level by Governments and at the local level by local authorities, national machinery for the advancement of women also has an extremely important role to play. An influential role can also be played by the mass media in combating discrimination and in stressing equality in active education to raise public awareness of discrimination against women.

> *"In situations where there is de jure recognition of women's rights, the need may arise to increase awareness of such rights. Where there is no such recognition, the need to raise awareness for the purpose of agitating for such rights becomes necessary."*
>
> Brigitte Mabandla, Gender Studies Coordinator, South Africa

Legal literacy

One of the obstacles to the elimination of de facto discrimination is the fact that most women and men are not aware of women's legal rights or do not fully understand the legal and administrative systems through which they must be implemented.

The importance of increasing awareness by women of their rights as an essential means of implementing the Forward-looking Strategies was recognized during the first review and appraisal of the implementation

> *"The main problem is not the lack of awareness of women's rights nor the legal literacy, but rather that of preserving what has already been achieved, and to enable women to reflect on their past experiences, as well as to understand the new possibilities of transforming their lives according to the new political and economic situation in the country."*
>
> Irina Mouleshkova, Lecturer, Bulgaria

of the Strategies in 1990. Recommendation 1 arising from that review and appraisal states that:

> *"Governments, in association with women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations, should take steps on a priority basis to inform women and men of women's rights under international conventions and national law and to prepare and/or continue campaigns for women's 'legal literacy' using formal and non-formal education at all levels, the mass media and other means."*

Legal procedures in most countries are complex. To make use of the legal system, people must be informed about it and the way in which it works. While poor people, in general, lack such information, women in particular can be especially disadvantaged, since they frequently have less access to news and information about new legislative changes than men. If the law is to be an effective instrument for women, it must be understood fully and seen by women as an integral part of their daily lives. Furthermore, in countries where the law does not adequately protect a woman, her awareness of this fact might facilitate a conscious decision on her part to protect her own interests.

> *"We need to formulate legal literacy strategies that will communicate to participants the complexities of the law, without creating a dependency on law and lawyers. ... A legal literacy programme must enable women to apply that critical awareness to the law and legal process, discovering both the limits and possibilities of law in the struggle for social transformation."*
>
> Ratna Kapur, Advocate, India

The term "legal literacy" is often advocated as a means of realizing the rights guaranteed by law. Its objectives are to demystify the processes of law and to make women aware of channels for legal assistance and action and thereby help them to make use of the legal system for improving the quality of their lives and facilitating their full participation in the development process. At the heart of legal literacy is the awareness of rights. Access to information is the first, and often most significant, step for ensuring women's access to the processes of law. Legal literacy is necessary for both women and men, as part of their roles as citizens of their countries. It can be combined with campaigns emphasizing women's contribution to society, especially in the family, which should lead to an appreciation of the vital role of women in society and an improved attitude on the part of policy makers, legislators, administrators and the public about women's legal and social status.

> *"Attitudes and socialisation can be impediments in the struggle for women's legal literacy. Attitudinal changes are often the most difficult to achieve particularly when you are trying to achieve that change in adults who are, for all intents and purposes, set in their ways. The socialization process has meant that women too see certain practices as being perfectly in place."*
>
> Amy S. Tsanga, Lawyer, Zimbabwe

Expert group meeting

An Expert Group Meeting on Increased Awareness by Women of their Rights, Including Legal Literacy was held at Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, 18-22 May 1992, in preparation for the consideration of this topic by the Commission on the Status of Women under the priority theme on equality in 1993. The meeting was attended by eight experts, each of whom presented a case-study on their countries re-

> *"The critical points to consider are the following:*
>
> *"1. Legal literacy is not only a process for disseminating **information** about women's rights, legal remedies and how to activate them, but a process of promoting women's abilities to assess the meaning of rights, assert rights or take action to change the definition of rights through the political process.*
>
> *"2. Developing women's critical capacities and skills for action is a prerequisite for taking action on the knowledge of law and of rights that women may acquire.*
>
> *"3. Community based programs aimed at women's development (production and income generation, labor organizing, education, community development, reproduction and health, violence against women, etc.) provide the greatest potential for establishing sustainable, lasting legal literacy among women.*
>
> *"4. An interdisciplinary approach, in which personnel are trained in participatory, problem posing methods of education as well as law is essential to effectiveness in women's legal literacy.*
>
> *"5. Community based, direct legal literacy needs to be supplemented with educational strategies that also target the public through the media and the structures of the legal system, especially the police and the courts, schools and other public institutions, law school curricula and continuing education of legal professionals."*
>
> *Margaret A. Schuler, Consultant, United States of America*

garding women's awareness of their rights and their legal literacy. Wide-ranging conclusions and recommendations were adopted for submission to the Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

The communications procedure was set up by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 76 (V) of 5 August 1947 in order to permit individuals to bring instances of discrimination to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women, which would thereby be able to identify new trends and problems. The procedure is not intended to be a means of solving individual problems but of eventually solving more fundamental problems on a broader level.

For this purpose, discrimination is defined in terms of article 1 of the Convention, namely:

"Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Anyone who has personally suffered discriminatory treatment or has a reasonably attested knowledge of such treatment can write to the Secretariat of the Commission, the Division for the Advancement of Women, indicating the nature of the discrimination. If the case is judged to fall within the terms of the procedure, the Secretariat will acknowledge receipt of the communication and enquire whether the correspondent wishes to keep her identity confidential. Once this fact has been established, the complaint is made available to the Government of the country concerned for comments.

All the communications received are listed for confidential distribution to members of the Commission. A working group reviews them to determine whether any trends are apparent and reports back to the Commission.

On occasion, bringing a communication to the attention of a Government could encourage action to be taken to rectify a situation. The procedure can only be really effective, however, if enough communications are received to enable the identification of trends. As yet, this has only happened once, when the problem identified, violence against detained women, was subsequently taken up and studied by the Commission.

In order for communications to be reviewed by the Commission at its next session, they should be received by the Secretariat by 15 November 1992.

THE CONVENTION AS A TOOL FOR JUSTICE

As the Convention becomes more widely known, increased use is being made of it. It is often quoted in recommendations for legal amendments. It has also been cited in several court cases in different countries.

THE WORLD'S WOMEN 1970-1990*

The purpose of the publication entitled *The World's Women 1970-1990* is twofold: to inform and to stimulate action. It is the fruit of a collaborative effort of the United Nations system. The Statistical Office of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat coordinated the preparation of the publication, assembled the statistical data and organized its presentation. The United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women shared in its authorship. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the International Labour Office, the Food

* *The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, Social Statistics and Indicators*, Series K, No. 8 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3).

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Bank provided statistics and special studies in their own fields of expertise.

The World's Women 1970-1990 aims at providing simple but detailed information on the role of women in economic and political life and in the family. Its target groups are women themselves, those who are campaigning for their interests, and also public and private decision makers and the media. The publication also seeks to demonstrate the need for changes in certain policies that are unfavourable to women.

The World's Women 1970-1990 is designed to work through the weight of words and the shock of figures. Decision makers and the media can be convinced of the need to act and to adapt policies and programmes only if the ideas advanced are substantiated by figures and statistics. The publication therefore contains a wealth of sometimes innovative statistics intended to demonstrate the validity of ideas that have been asserted for a long time but that have not always been sufficiently validated by facts as to be convincing.

The World's Women 1970-1990 contains only analyses and indicators that can be easily understood by non-specialists. Moreover, each indicator is briefly analysed and the conclusions to be drawn from it are explained. In each chapter, major and wide-ranging issues connected with the status of women are discussed. Women are the focal point for the resolution in silence of the tensions born of competition between different responsibilities: private and public, familial and economic. Their work - frequently measured insufficiently or not at all - cushions the effects of economic shocks on the family's standard of living, as shown in the section of the publication dealing with the effects of structural adjustment policies.

One chapter deals with the family and there are others on economic and public life; and education, health and family planning (key dimensions in the effort to promote the advancement of women). There is a separate chapter on housing, human settlements and the environment. In each, the specific problems confronting women are described not only in economic, but also in social and human terms.

Most of the statistics have been obtained from official or quasi-official sources as well as other sources of recognized professional quality. In many of the areas covered, statistics are still rare and fragmentary, which necessitated an innovative approach.

For example, studies are cited that have been carried out at the national level and whose results are significant or disturbing, even if for the area in question no systematic statistics exist at the international level. The publication also uses approximate indicators to inquire into the status of women in particular sectors. For example, the size of the informal sector is estimated by means of statistics on the number of self-employed women. The detailed statistics on the results of surveys on time use in different countries, which draw on comparatively new information, show the proportion of time that women spend working and the way they divide the day between economic activity and unpaid housework, including child care.

The Division for the Advancement of Women collaborated closely with the other contributors in the preparation of the chapter on women's participation in public life and leadership. The chapter contains new indicators and fresh statistics on women holding positions of responsibility in government and on the parliamentary seats occupied by women. It includes a list, albeit short, of the countries where women have achieved at least 10 per cent of ministerial-level positions; the names of the few women heads of government in the twentieth century, and the results of a number of studies on women in economic decision-making positions. Statistics are provided on women in public enterprises and on female directors and managers. It is pointed out that women appear to be taking new paths to assuming decision-making roles, in particular through non-governmental organizations or community-based activities.

The World's Women 1970-1990 takes stock of the developments in the status of women in different regions. The findings are rather pessimistic. There are regions where the health and the education levels for women remain unacceptably low, as in sub-Saharan Africa; or where economic decline or population growth have swept away the modest progress achieved, as in southern Asia. In other regions a more chequered pattern can be observed. Frequently there has been progress in health, education and fertility control, while social and economic participation remains unsatisfactory, as in northern Africa and western Asia. Even in the developed regions, discrimination persists in the areas of training, wages and the kinds of occupations open to women.

The publication cites various factors to explain this lack of significant progress, such as policy bias. Development policies often neglect the sectors that, like subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, are of the greatest importance to women. Women are "invisible" workers. Their economic output is poorly

measured and activities such as housework or the sale of home-prepared food are not recognized. Women are "workers on the cheap", receiving lower wages than men for identical work and confined to tasks that are poorly remunerated or unpaid, beginning with housework. They are systematically overlooked in investment policies. Families and societies accord low priority to the education and health of girls even if studies are unanimous in demonstrating that an investment in the education and health of women is an investment in the education and health of their families and societies. Women also lack access to credit, support and training initiatives.

The publication draws a number of conclusions regarding the concrete actions that need to be undertaken: to invest more in women while at the same time correcting policy bias; to eliminate the inequality that women suffer in the areas of health and education, employment and access to positions of responsibility, wages and credit, and still, all too frequently, to information on their rights; to measure and recognize the work of women; and to equip women with skills for greater participation and responsibility. These actions would lead not only to equality, but also to a more just and lasting kind of development.

The publication suggests a programme for the years to come, which is presented in an overview of major trends and priorities. It also contains specific examples of measures to be taken. To counter domestic violence, for example, it provides statistics on the kinds of measures adopted by 10 developed countries and 15 developing countries to protect women against domestic violence (a distinction is made between police measures, the building of shelters, the work of non-governmental organizations, legal aid, financial assistance and housing assistance).

The publication also studies the situation of certain groups of women whose concerns should be of priority interest when formulating public programmes. For example, there is a difference between women-headed households in developing countries and such households in developed countries: in developing countries, they frequently consist of single women with children, while in the developed countries they tend to consist of elderly women living by themselves. The challenge posed to social and economic policy makers is quite different in each case.

Sales of *The World's Women 1970-1990* are among the highest for United Nations publications in English. It has been extremely well received by the press and has been favourably reviewed by prestigious newspapers. As for its impact on public and private decision makers and as to whether it will have even the slightest effect on policies and programmes, only the future will tell.

Consequently, an updated edition is planned for the Fourth World Conference. Its preparation will be closely coordinated with the quinquennial review and appraisal of the Forward-looking Strategies. It will thus be less of a detailed presentation of statistics than a collection of thoughts on the priority subjects and the way in which countries have tackled them. Many organizations of the United Nations system have begun preparing this revised edition. The Division for the Advancement of Women will contribute, in particular, through research on women and economic power.

The World's Women 1970-1990 will be supplemented, in time for the Fourth World Conference, by another publication, also to be prepared by organizations of the United Nations system. It is the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, whose preparation is being coordinated by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The *World Survey* will deal with only a limited number of subjects and study them in depth. It will discuss in detail the way in which the United Nations Secretariat, as well as other entities, is tackling specific problems related to the status of women, the obstacles being encountered, and possible solutions. The *World Survey* will examine such subjects as the relationship between urbanization and the status of women, poverty, and the participation of women in economic leadership.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, annex.

[2] *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

[3] See Andrée Michel, "Positive action for the benefit of women: preliminary study", commissioned by the Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1986 (EG(86)1), p.4.

Cover:

A women's equal rights rally. The sign reads: "Your daughter needs equal rights".

A woman in Pakistan following her mother-in-law's advice, breast-fed her baby son and bottle-fed her baby daughter. The daughter died the next day.

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